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TRAIL & LANDSCAPE



*A Publication Concerned With
Natural History and Conservation*

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

Editor

Karen McLachlan
Hamilton

Production Assistant**Mailing Team**

Sarah Anderson
Janice Dowling
Karen McLachlan
Hamilton
David McNicoll
Henry Stegér

Associate Editor

Ari Hymes-
Vandermeulen

Mailing Team

Coordinator
Sarah Anderson

Publications Mail Registration # 09798

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

— Founded 1879 —

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Fenja Brodo

Objectives of the Club: To promote the appreciation, preservation and conservation of Canada's natural heritage; to encourage investigation and publish the results of research in all fields of natural history and to diffuse the information on these fields as widely as possible; to support and co-operate with organizations engaged in preserving, maintaining or restoring environments of high quality for living things.

Club Publications: THE CANADIAN FIELD-NATURALIST, a quarterly devoted to reporting research in all fields of natural history relevant to Canada, and TRAIL & LANDSCAPE, a quarterly providing articles on the natural history of the Ottawa Valley and on Club activities.

Field Trips, Lectures and other natural history activities are arranged for local members; see "Coming Events" in this issue.

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THE OTTAWA FIELD-NATURALISTS' CLUB

Box 35069, Westgate P.O. Ottawa, Ontario K1Z 1A2

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TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

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Welcome New Members

Ottawa Area

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Ayatana Artist Res. Program
Rihab Azab & Family
Anne Botman & Family
Claude Bouchard & Family
John & Mary Bridson
Steve Burgess & Family
Janet Buttera & Family
Xiao Chen & Family
Roger Clark
Tara Conroy & Family
Dan Currie & Family
John Cybanski & Family
Connor Edington
Paul Gallagher
Bruce Gordon & Family
Beverly Graham & Family
Jaime Graham
Jean Grundy & Family
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Arlene Harrold
Margaret Hart
Sylvia Hayek & Family
Maryanna Hemming
Donald Hickey & Family
Penny Holmes-Tuor & Family

Nina Jason & Family
Karen Johns & Family
Suzanne Kettley & Family
Jean-Paul Lalonde & Family
Tiffany Lancaster & Family
Li-Shien Lee & Family
Pieter Leenhouts
Susan Lehmann & Family
A. Lindeman/M. Connolly
Valerie McCabe & Family
Joshua McCullough
Robert McFetridge & Family
Juliet McMurren & Family
Andrew Noden
Cynthia Paquin & Family
Justine Payne
Mary Ann Perron
Maria Perrone & Family
Wayne Perry & Family
Michel E.J. Picard & Family
Jim Picken & Family
Remi Roy & Family
Connie Schulz & Family
Jane Spenceer
Marlene Thoms & Family
Melanie Willis/Peter Napier
Pam Willison & Family

Gatineau Area

Matt Bieber & Family
Jean-Sébastien Blais
Andréa Hacquoil & Family
Dirk Schumann & Family
Geneviève Séguin (Blais)
Lenika Van Velthuisen (Blais)

Ontario

Anne Marie Ridout Bird Studies
James Hawley
Peggy Leger & Family
Julie Prusila & Family

Quebec

Richard & Jean Gregson

Nova Scotia

Amelia MacDonald

United States

Polly Bass

Henry Steger
Chair, Membership Committee
February 2015

“Golden Anniversary” Membership List 1943 - 2015

*Henry Steger
Membership Chair*

Joined in

1943	Dr. C. Stuart Houston	Saskatoon SK
1943	Sheila Thomson	Ottawa ON
1946	Dr. Jack M. Gillett	Ottawa ON
1951	Dr. E.L. Bousfield	Mississauga ON
1954	Yvonne & James F. Bendell	Clayton ON
1956	Dr. Charles D. Bird	Eskine AB
1956	J.W. Holliday	Ottawa ON
1957	R.E. Bedford	Ottawa ON
1957	Joe E. Bryant	Ottawa ON
1958	F.R. Cook	North Augusta ON
1960	Dr. A.J. Erskine	Sackville NB
1960	V. Bruce Collins	Bancroft ON
1960	Dr. G.R. & D. Hanes	Carleton Place ON
1961	R.W. Nero	Winnipeg MB
1962	Jo Ann Mackenzie	Surrey BC
1963	Dr. T. Mosquin	Balderson, ON
1964	Ron Pittaway	Toronto, ON

The Club was saddened by the passing away of Honorary Member Dr. Jack M. Gillett (Ottawa) who joined in 1946.

The 136th Annual Business Meeting

K. McLachlan Hamilton

It is required by law for organizations to have an annual business meeting. The meeting is open to all members and, typically, is a financial review and a forum to elect the Board of Directors. It is also the time for members to address any concerns about the operation of the organization, the members of the Board, or anything else they wish to discuss. Therefore to comply with the law, The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club (OFNC) always holds its Annual Business Meeting (ABM) at the January meeting.

The 2015 ABM was held on 13 January at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden (FWG). Approximately 20 members attended, the majority of which were members of the Board of Directors. The documents provided were the minutes of the previous ABM, the Treasurer's Annual Report (followed by the 2014 financial statements), the Nominating Committee's report (with a slate of names for members to vote on), and the Committees's annual reports. Time is always allotted for members to read through the documents before the meeting begins.

The Treasurer's report indicated that in 2014 revenue exceeded expenses. This is good news because the Club had been running "in the red" for several years. The change was due to an increase in membership and donations/bequests received, while the expenses remained stable. The major expense continues to be The Canadian Field-Naturalist (CFN); however, its costs have been decreasing since the change to the online journal system.

As for the Executive, there were no surprises as is no change from the previous year. Your Executive is:

Fenja Brodo	President
Henry Steger	1 st Vice-President
Eleanor Zurgrigg	2 nd Vice-President
Annie Belair	Recording Secretary
Ken Young	Treasurer

The committee also provided a list of other members who will represent your club at board meetings. In this case there were a few changes: Dan Brunton and Don Hackett are retiring, while Louis L'Arrivée and Jeff Saarela are joining the board. Therefore the Board of Directors are:

Carolyn Callaghan	Alex MacDonald
Barbara Chouinard	Ann MacKenzie
Julia Cipriani	Karen McLachlan Hamilton
Owen Clarkin	Lynn Ovenden
Barry Cottam	Remy Poulin
Diane Kitching	Jeff Saarella
Louis L'Arrivée	

Judging by their annual reports, the committees were busy last year. Here are some of the highlights:

- Because of a generous bequest, the OFNC was able to provide a \$200 000 donation to the Nature Conservancy for the purchase of the "Gervais Caves." It was rather timely that this 80-acre property, situated along the Ottawa River near Pembroke, was up for sale. The owners were hoping the land would remain in its natural state, and the OFNC purchased it for that reason. The area is unique to the region because of its karst geology, its underwater cave network, and the number of provincially rare and species-at-risk plants found there. If people are interested in visiting the Gervais property, an excursion is planned for Saturday 23 May. See the Coming Events or the OFNC website (www.ofnc.ca) for further details.
- The Constance Bay area was chosen for a one year Biothon. People have been invited to visit the site to document the flora and fauna present. The study began in August 2014, and while several events have occurred, more will follow.
- A special publication "Larose Forest: A Naturalist's Guide" is now available to members. This bilingual pamphlet describes the forest and lists the birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, plants, butterflies and dragonflies/damselflies found so far. Two hundred copies were printed and are available at the FWG Interpretation Centre or at the monthly meetings. Price: \$4.
- Communications within the Club have become more current. Now there are several ways to get your Club information. "Field Notes," an OFNC blog, writes about the monthly meetings, events and member profiles, while the "Bulletin Board" posts Club news, regional events, and information from other organizations. Also, the OFNC subscribes to Twitter and Facebook.

- Despite some setbacks (i.e. 56 ash trees were removed from the ash wood lot due to an Emerald Ash Borer infestation), the FWG volunteers continue to work hard at maintaining this city gem. The William Cody Fern Garden has been re-established, the Monarch Waystation continues to develop and the Bill Holland Trail has been refurbished. The volunteers also lead garden tours for OFNC members, the Ottawa Horticulture Society, the Monarch Teachers Network and for the Weed Across Borders conference.
- The annual plant sale was a success, and they hope the 2015 sale will be the same. The date for their annual sale is Saturday 6 June from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- The Macoun Club continues to flourish. This club met most Saturdays during the school year where they participated in a combination of indoor meetings (at the FWG) and outdoor field trips. Most of the field trips were to properties in Lanark County or to their nature study site at Stony Swamp. This club is a great way for youth aged 8-18 to experience natural history in a safe manner. If a Club member knows someone who is interested in the natural world, but does not know where to go, I suggest they check out the Macoun Field Club at (www.macounfieldclub.ca).
- In 2014, the Macoun members worked on a special project to map the occurrence of Garlic Mustard and Dog-strangling Vine (DSV) in the study site and they continue to remove the plants where possible. Dog-strangling Vine is also pervasive at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden. It had become so bad that it was decided that a small patch of the weed would be treated with a herbicide to kill the flowers and seed pods. It was a controversial decision, and the result is being monitored before further decisions are made. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada was looking into a more ecologically friendly method, and in 2014 released 500 moth larvae (which feed on DSV) at the Experimental Farm. Hopefully this bio-control method will be successful and the FWG will not have to resort to further herbicide treatments.
- CFN has been on schedule, which is probably the reason for the increased number of submissions, providing plenty of material for subsequent issues.

The complete version of the ABM is published in *The Canadian Field Naturalist*. The Board meets 10 months a year (July and August exempt) and the minutes are posted on the Club website. Anyone who is interested may find them there.

OFNC Committees for 2015

K. McLachlan Hamilton

The following OFNC committee members were approved by the Board of Directors. Members may be added during the year as approved by the Board of Directors. The members listed below will operate your club in 2015. Committee Chairs appear in bold letters. Should you have any questions, comments, complaints or compliments pertaining to the operations of a committee, or should you desire to serve on a committee, please contact the Chair or speak to a member of the relevant committee. The contact information is available on the OFNC website (www.ofnc.ca).

AWARDS

Eleanor Zurbrigg

Irwin Brodo

Julia Cipriani

Christine Hanrahan

Ann MacKenzie

Karen McLachlan

Hamilton

BIRDS

Chris Traynor

Tony Beck

Bob Cermak

Claire Elliot

Lorraine Ellworthy

Anouk Hoedeman

Bernie Ladouceur

Gillian Mastromatteo

Bev McBride

Mark Patry

Rémy Poulin*

Jon Ruddy

Jennifer Spallin

Nina Stavlund

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Claire Elliott
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Shelley Morphy
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Hume Douglas
Jakob Mueller
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Rémy Poulin
Jeff Saarela
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WILDLIFE
GARDEN**

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Ted Farnworth
Sandra Garland
David Hobden
Diane Lepage
Elizabeth Moore
Barbara Riley
Henry Steger
Eleanor Zurrbrigg

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CLUB**

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Annie Bélair
Barbara Gaertner
Diane Kitching*
Vinko Culjak Mathieu

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John Cooper

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Carolyn Callaghan
Paul Catling
Jay Fitzsimmons
Tony Gaston
Bill Halliday
Amanda Martin
Karen McLachlan
Hamilton
Frank Pope
Trina Rywinski
David Seburn

* These individuals represent the committee on the Board.

More About Missing Insects

Hinrich Harries

Because of very similar observations, indicative of a general decline in insects and other arthropods during the past half century, I read with great interest Jack Holliday's "Missing, Ten Million Insects" in the most recent issue of *Trail & Landscape*.

I am a geobotanist, and sometime bird watcher, gardener and forager of wild mushrooms. We have lived in Sackville, New Brunswick, since 1963 and acquired our present home in 1966. It includes a large garden with trees, shrubs and perennial beds, two acres of dyked Tantramar marshland, formerly managed for hay but abandoned long before our arrival and very wet due to the neglect of ditches, and, at the marsh-edge, thickets of osier willow (*Salix viminalis*). In the following I will compare conditions as I remember them from the 1960s and 1970s with observations made between 2005 and 2012, when I retired from field studies and spent much of my time gardening and weeding perennial beds on my knees, close to the ground. I will use "formerly" when referring to the 1960s and 70s and "recently" for the period of 2005 to 2012.

The full realization of a great scarcity of insects and other arthropods came to me in 2005 and I started to take some notes, but an increasing apprehension about their seeming scarcity had been with me for some years before. Since 2005 this scarcity has persisted but did not noticeably increase, thus the decline must have happened sometime before 2005, between about 1980 and 2000. In the following I will report on some of my observations and impressions.

- Large insects splattered onto car windshields. This was formerly a recurrent problem. The whole windshield would be covered to the extent that one had to stop the car and wash the windshield to see at all. Now the impact of a single large insect is a rare event. The change to more slanting windshields may be a contributing factor.
- House flies. During the summer we often leave the outside door to the kitchen open. Formerly house flies and the occasional bluebottle fly were a nuisance. Recently there are generally none or only one at a time, never more than two, and no more bluebottle flies.
- Earwigs. During the 1980s (and early 1990s?) they experienced a population explosion in early fall, and some frequently made it into the

house. Now I have not seen one in the house or the garden for years.

- Butterflies. Recently the only one seen regularly in the garden is a white one (Cabbage White?), with a few fluttering about but not visiting flowers.
- June Beetles. Formerly their emergence on a warm and still summer evening was a seasonal event; we lost two cats chasing after them out onto the street. There are still some but not enough to make a noticeable appearance.
- Ladybird Beetles. Formerly one of the expected cast of common insects in the garden and, perhaps seeking a place to hibernate, on our back porch. I have not seen one for years. Nor have I seen their prey, patches of bluish-grey aphids.
- Insects visiting flowering trees and shrubs. Our garden includes a large Small-leaved Linden tree (*Tilia cordata*), possibly the largest Panicle Hydrangea (*Hydrangea paniculata*) in Sackville and groups of introduced wild roses (*Rosa canina* and *R. multiflora*). While blooming profusely in their respective seasons, there is never more than the odd bumble bee or honey bee on them and nothing else conspicuous.
- Woollybear caterpillar. I have not seen one recently.
- Arthropods other than insects. I have not recently seen any of the formerly familiar garden creepy-crawlers: centipedes, millipedes, daddy longlegs, and red spider mites.
- Wormy King Boletus (*Boletus edulis*). Formerly they were heavily wormy (due to the larvae of fungus beetles?). Still in 1996 for each of the two small collections I noted "all wormy." Large harvests were made in 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2002. All of them were worm-free, as were the smaller subsequent harvests.

Conclusions. Observations indicate a drastic decline in insects and other invertebrates occurring relatively rapidly sometime between 1980 and 2000. During this time there has been little change on our land and in the local area, and none which would possibly explain the decline. Thus local causes can be excluded. Based on these observations and impressions, a rough estimate of the magnitude of the decline in insect biomass would be 90%, from a baseline of a 100% in 1970 to 10% in 2010. There has been a parallel decline in resident birds, which would be explained by the increasing scarcity of their insect food.

Anecdotes of Hibernial Anoxia

Frederick W. Schueler¹

My Kemptville Creek is anoxic and yellow
Sealed under the ice when the branches are bare.
Most fishes let go and drift down with the current,
While Mudminnows forage for bubbles of air.

My white Kemptville Creek is as smooth as a highway,
The Swamp Maple path, the marsh-dwellers' abode
Where Otters & Mink, and the Muskrat & Beaver
Briefly emerge on the Coyotes' road.

My Kemptville Creek's emerald green in the winter,
When snow and hard ice keep the air from the stream.
Open a window, and wavering pond weeds will
Show you the summer as if in a dream.

*My Kemptville Creek's golden and silver and amber
Through Wild Rice and Cattails wide under the sun.
From Cranberry Lake with the echo of Loon calls
Through Bishops to meet the South Branch where they run.*²

In the fall of 1982, during my postdoctoral fellowship at the National Museum of Canada, I was roped into teaching freshwater ecology for a sabbaticalling professor at the University of Ottawa (U of O). Having collected frogs from roadside ditches all across Canada, I thought I was perfectly qualified to teach such a course, and it was a bit of a shock to find that at the U of O freshwater ecology was limnology, taught as a deepwater sport, more akin to oceanography than it was to our

¹ Bishops Mills Natural History Centre, RR#2 Bishops Mills, Ontario, Canada K0G 1T0, (613) 258-3107 <bckcdb@istar.ca>.

² Winter verses of the Kemptville Creek Anthem—Schueler, Frederick W. and Aleta Karstad. 2013 [2014]. *Landscape: Progress towards a philosophy of sustainable occupancy*. Library of One Thing and Another, Bishops Mills, Ontario. paperback, 222 pages, 44 illustrations, 1 map. <http://pinicola.ca/books/landscape.htm> /.

1977 motto “the reason herpetology stops at the limits of roads is because anything else is idiocy.”

After the students and I had a great time familiarizing ourselves with a bunch of boats and pelagic equipment during the field portion of the course, I composed the lectures by reading through the textbook, Robert G. Wetzel’s *Limnology*³, each week staying about a chapter ahead of the students.⁴ This was highly informative, and gave me ideas about nutrient and water flows that have influenced our work ever since, but there was a significant tadpole in the lemonade: Wetzel affirmed that, under their ice cover, streams remained well oxygenated through the winter.

The problem with this was that in the winter before I’d been trying to replicate the famous Bumpus observations of natural selection through differential survival of winter disasters using Northern Leopard Frogs (*Rana* [now *Lithobates*] *pipiens*) that my herpetological mentor, Francis Cook, had marked at his farm on Middle (or “North Kemptville”) Creek. In the course of the previous winter, I’d been cutting holes in the ice to check the status of frogs, and had nets in the current to catch frogs and fish that were swept downstream. It had turned out that the mortality of both fish and frogs had been impressive, and while I easily obtained the winter-kill sample of Leopard Frogs, there weren’t enough survivors to compare with them. In the winter of 1982-83 I borrowed an oxygen meter from the course to confirm that it was the lack of oxygen in the water which was killing the frogs and fish.

It was easy to reason that this anoxia occurred when solid ice cover kept the air from the water while the metabolism of muck-dwelling organisms continued to grind away, sending oxygen-depleted water down the creek. It was also easy to infer that the difference between what I was observing in Grenville County, where Kemptville Creek had a gradient of 14 cm per kilometre, and New York and Wisconsin, where most of Wetzel’s material seemed to be sourced, was that the topographic relief in those hilly states allowed their babbling brooks more access to the air than our beaver-flattened creek obtained under 40 cm of ice liberally buried in snow. There’s great variation from year to year in how solid the ice cover is, and the Cooks have

³ Wetzel, Robert G. 1975. *Limnology*. Thomson Learning & W.B. Saunders, Philadelphia, London, Toronto, 743 pp. .

⁴ In the end-of-course U of O instructor evaluation, they did, however, give me good marks for “command of material,” doubtless because of the close correspondence between what I said and the material in the textbook.

⁵ Hermon Bumpus and Natural Selection in the House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/2406980?sid=21105482606723&uid=4&uid=3737720&uid=3739448&uid=2129&uid=70&uid=2>.

discovered⁶ that the parents of the doomed Leopard Frogs of the early 1980s seem to hibernate upstream, where a spring seems to provide a reliably oxygenated refuge, and in most years the creek below the riffles in Bishops Mills is also a reliably oxygenated hibernaculum.

In the years since, even without much winter travel, we've had various confirmations that in areas of low topographic relief, and increasingly to the north where winters are longer, anoxia, and resulting deaths of gill- or skin-breathing animals, is more widespread. The most graphic illustration of this is the way the range of the water-hibernating Leopard Frog contracts northward towards the vicinity of large well-oxygenated rivers, while that of the terrestrially hibernating Wood Frog (*Lithobates sylvaticus*) goes uniformly north, to a limit presumably determined by low temperatures.⁷

A very graphic illustration of the effects of anoxia came on 25 January 2003, in Kemptville Creek, near Hutchins Corners,⁸ 44.93237°N 75.69215°W, when Keith Mellwaine and Ali MacKeen took us to a spring seepage through soft maple/ash woods into the marshy creek, where they had found a flock of 30 American Robins (*Turdus migratorius*) hanging out around an opening in the ice. This was where the water from a spring flowed into the de-oxygenated creek, and the robins had tracked up the snow all around the open water while feeding on dead and dying sunfish (*Lepomis gibbosus*) and fewer Rock Bass (*Ambloplites* spp.). More anoxia-tolerant species—Leopard and Mink (*L. septentrionalis*) frogs and tadpoles, Brown Bullheads (*Ambloplites nebulosus*), mudminnows (*Umbra* spp.), redbelly dace (*Phoxinus*), and sticklebacks (*Culaea* spp.)—concentrated around the hole in roiling crowds. We turned up some slabs of ice with barely any water under them where the fish were nearly continuous, and the colours of the flat-lying Sunfish were as brilliant as an oriental carpet. Water levels had been low and uniform this winter, and ice cover was heavy, just as it had been with higher water levels in 2000-2001 when the water was “cat farts” anoxic below the dam in Oxford Mills.

Mudpuppy Night in Oxford Mills is our weekly nocturnal visit to Kemptville Creek

⁶ Personal communication.

⁷ See especially the maps in Preston, W. B. 1982. *Amphibians and Reptiles of Manitoba*. 128 pp.

⁸ Robins' Winter Feast on Kemptville Creek <http://pinicola.ca/robincrk.htm>.

⁹ This page includes links to field notes from all Mudpuppy Nights <http://pinicola.ca/mudpnpl.htm>.

below the dam at Oxford Mills, where flat bedrock and clear shallow water provide safe footing for researchers and spectators as large numbers of giant fluffy-gilled aquatic Salamanders pursue their winter activities.⁹ We started Mudpuppy Nights in 1999, but it was in 2001 that we began to experience “eat farts”—episodes of anoxia, when solid ice cover and heavy snow above the dam sent murky brown oxygen-depleted water over the spillways, obliging the Mudpuppies (*Necturus maculosus*) to retreat into the rocky creek downstream, where the water has picked up some oxygen. There are no Mudpuppies above the dam, presumably because of the anoxic episodes. In 2003, when the fish were dying upstream, we smelled the hydrogen sulphide of “cat farts,” but didn’t have any nights when the anoxia below the dam was severe enough to drive all the Mudpuppies downstream.

In the polar-vortex winter of 2013-14, episodes of anoxia began on 6 and 12 December, causing a kill of frogs below the dam that were seen to be eaten by Mudpuppies in the following weeks. Large numbers of ‘puppies were seen until the high water of a mid-January thaw, and as the water level fell at the end of the month the water was darkly turbid, and counts of Mudpuppies fell. By 6 February the water was “dark and brown-turbid [with] some cat farts odour,” no ‘puppies were to be seen and “I gave the [Oxford Mills] Beaver [seout]s a little lecture on the unpredictability of the real world, and how much more interesting this is than their unfortunately hyper-scheduled and electronic-plug-in lives.”

Then through February, and as late as 21 March, the oxygen was on and off, with many nights when no Mudpuppies were seen. This anoxia was just an inconvenience to Mudpuppies, but when spring finally came, the usual mass movements of Leopard Frogs across the roads from hibernating to breeding sites in the creeks above the dam just did not occur. The dates of this migration is something we record, and we went out again and again without seeing any frogs on the road. Through the spring there was not much calling by other aquatic-hibernating frogs, and through the summer very few frogs of water-hibernating species were on the roads, leaving us to conclude that there had been massive winter mortality along with, or caused by, the anoxia.

When I was setting the nets for downstream-drifting frogs in Middle Creek in the early 1980s, I found many living fish drifting downstream as the oxygen levels decreased, and this requires upstream migration in the spring. As, and after, the ice is melting from the creek we sometimes see ribbon-like dense dark schools of sticklebaeks, redbelly dace, and mudminnows swirling up the creek at the Bishops

¹⁰ Schueler, Frederick W. 2008. *Ten Other Questions about Road Ecology*. 11 pp. 31 December 2008 http://pinicola.ca/rd_ecol_10_quest.pdf.

Mills bridge, and in one spring (after a few years without anoxia) Yellow Perch (*Perca flavescens*).¹⁰ The little fish not only reoccupy the creeks, but also spread out across flooded fields in the quest of new or newly freed habitat.

A final example of the importance of winter anoxia in northern waters is the migration of aquatic insects, especially Hemiptera (Bugs—Backswimmers, Water Boatmen, Toe-biters) away from water bodies which likely become anoxic. Some go to hibernate under cover, logs or litter in the woods, while others fly to predictably oxygenated rivers—Corixid Water Boatmen coming to prairie rivers in vast numbers in the fall, and heading back to pothole ponds in the spring, being the most spectacular example of this kind of migration¹¹.

Winter anoxia is one of those things which happen while academics are in their classrooms, government employees are in their offices, and the water is under its ice. Most of the few published accounts of hibernal anoxia are from lakes rather than streams. Naomi Langlois-Anderson says that few Conservation Authorities are tracking winter oxygen levels, and that in her time at the South Nation Conservation they have “only had a couple of reports or concerns of winter river anoxia . . . more often it is pond or lake anoxia.” This neglect doesn’t mean it’s an unimportant factor in understanding our rivers: it has the potential for determining which species live over long stretches of low-gradient rivers, of amplifying the biological breaks caused by dams, and of causing wide swings in abundance of species depending on the annual severity of anoxia over the span of a few years.

The classic cause of anoxia in streams is organic pollution from sewage, from other spills or discharges, or from decaying plant material. Oxygenation is regarded as a sign of “good water quality,” and the conventional conservationist’s role is to prevent or minimize pollution or stagnation which contributes to anoxia. There’s a self-serving bias to this, of course, because the fish species which people most enjoy catching and eating have relatively high requirements for dissolved oxygen.

I’ve rehearsed the above incidents as examples of the kinds of things that can be observed and inferred about naturally-occurring anoxia in eastern Ontario streams. Like many other winter phenomena, it’s harder to study than something that happens in the summer, and requires familiarity with the site where it’s to be monitored. A few hundred metres of riffles can oxygenate water, so anoxia isn’t necessarily uniform along a stream.

¹¹ Vulnerable Watersheds <http://vulnerablewaters.blogspot.ca/2014/10/4-october-2014-finds-me-on-long-wood.html>.

How can you tell if and when your stream is anoxic? At Oxford Mills, where the water comes over a dam, we have the “cat farts” smell—an organic enhancement of whiffs of the hydrogen sulphide that’s released by reducing conditions, and the water is often cloudy with humic acids that have been loosened or precipitated by the change in water chemistry. The water seems to be foamier, and there’s often masses of frozen yellow froth. Dead animals, such as frogs and fish, are a good sign that anoxia has occurred, though one must be sure that the place where they are found hasn’t killed them by freezing to the bottom. Masses of corpses at the last place where oxygen would have occurred in a water body, like those crowded around the Robins’ fishing ground, are a good sign that anoxia was the cause of death. Meters for measuring oxygen directly are cheaper every year, and can sometimes be borrowed from office-bound institutions which wouldn’t be using them during the winter.

A century and a half ago, sewage and other organic pollution taught us that oxygen-depleted water was “bad,” but when there’s no pollution this is a southern bias that’s less and less applicable as one goes north. Our 35 years of experience have taught us that in Kemptville Creek winter anoxia, and the patterns of its occurrence over a series of years, are important natural determinants of the fauna of the creek. Some of the obvious questions that this raises are how American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) dams and impoundments influence oxygen levels, how anoxia influences where amphibians can successfully live or hibernate along streams, how it influences the benthic fauna of macro- and meso-invertebrates, what movements fish need to make to avoid it, and how dams influence these movements. If we’re going to understand Ontario’s low gradient streams and rivers, we’ll need to understand hibernal anoxia.

This is the full draft of an article that was cut down to *Anecdotes of Winter Rivers devoid of Oxygen* on the Ontario Rivers Alliance Blog, posted by Linda Heron on Sunday, January 18, 2015 at <http://www.ontarioriversalliance.ca/anecdotes-winter-rivers-devoid-oxygen-frederick-schueler/>.

Editor’s note: This article was modified to fit *T&L* style and does not reflect the author’s opinion on capitalization of the English names of higher taxa of organisms.

To read Frederick Schueller’s views on this see: F.W. Schueller. 1999. What’s in a Name? *EOBM Almanack*, Summer 1999 1(3):4-5. <http://pinicola.ca/ml999b.htm>.

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The Flies and the Spiders

Jack Halliday

At the late summer-early autumn time of the year, the fruit fly population is at its peak. They invade our houses, searching out apples, tomatoes and onions. They cluster on and in the beige "slop bucket" which is awaiting being dumped into the green bin.

They are annoying.

Our daughter-in-law, Carol, advised us of an effective trap for the tiny pests. One puts into an empty glass jar suitable bait, a piece of banana or an apple core works well. Then the mouth of the jar is covered by a piece of waxed paper held in place by an elastic, and four or five small holes are punched in the paper. The jar is placed where the flies congregate.

Soon the flies investigate the source of the fruity odour. It doesn't take them long to find the holes and enter the jar. Once inside they make themselves at home. When, and if, they attempt to leave, they can't locate the exits. They are trapped.

The problem arises when one wishes to get rid of the flies. Those of a sympathetic nature, carry the jar outside, remove the paper, and release them. Others, more practical, pop the jar into the microwave oven for 15 seconds.

And here is where the spider enters the picture. Some years ago, I discovered a book, *The Life of the Spider*, by John Crompton. Now here is a man who doesn't dislike or fear spiders (spiders have a bad reputation). On the contrary, he has studied them and writes chapters on each of the various "types." A delightful book: if you can find a copy, read it and your understanding of spiders will, I assure you, change. You may even begin to "like" spiders as much as John Crompton obviously does (perhaps did, the book was copyrighted in 1954).

Chapter three of the book is about Jumping Spiders. He writes: I have a soft spot for Jumping Spiders. They are nice, rather trusting little things, and very fond of a game. Our commonest jumping spider in Britain is the "Zebra Spider," conspicuously and unmistakable in black with broad white transverse markings. It loves greenhouses, and if you see one, and wish to please it, play hide and seek with it. It will peer at you from a corner, and keep coming out to show you where it is.

The same "Zebra" occurs here in Ottawa and few can be found most summer days on the north foundation wall outside of my house. Sometimes one or more enter the house, and can be seen on the inside of the north windows. The kitchen window seems to be a favourite hunting ground for one, rarely two. So, I have a jar of flies, there is a hungry predator searching for prey, how easy to open the paper seal on the jar and release a fly or two. Easier said than done, the elastic slips away, the paper drops, the entire population of flies escapes, most land on the window.

Zebra's sharp eyes see them at once and it quickly moves toward one. When close, it jumps, captures, retreats to a convenient corner, and "dines." Afterward it retires to its lair to digest and probably sleep. Seems to require two days to digest its meal and then again is seen scouting the window.

If you make a trap, it will catch flies and you will have several methods of disposing of the captives. If you are lucky, one of your windows will sport a jumping spider.

Reference

Crompton, J. 1954. *The Life of the Spider, A Mentor Book*. The New American Library, USA 191 pp.

The Doug Tarry Bird Study Awards for Young Ornithologists

Long Point Bird Observatory

This award offers people aged 13-17 "hands-on" training in field ornithology. Participants learn about bird systematics, avian behaviour and population dynamics. Regular field trips, slide shows and some nocturnal field work is included. The workshop will be held 1-9 August at the Long Point Bird Observatory.

Interested individuals can obtain information and application forms from: lpbo@birdscanada.org. **Deadline for applications is 30 April.**

Beaver House

A 27-year Adventure with Nature

Gillian Marston



My Mum and Dad, Daphne and Harry Marston, and I bought a 60 acre property in Beekwith Township in 1987 and built a house there that fall. Mum and Dad were retired and living in a small winterized cottage on the Ottawa River. I moved from an apartment in Ottawa. Other than my parents' three years on the river, we were basically city folk. But we knew in our hearts that in the country, in the woods in fact, was where we were meant to be. We were not wrong. I had to take a 12-year break from Beaver House because commuting to work got difficult, but I returned with my spouse Suzanne Deschênes about five years ago. Mum and Dad have been here throughout but are now having to move to a nice, nearby Seniors Residence. They are not sad as Beaver House is still here and they can return for visits and short stays whenever they want.

Mum and Dad did most of the exploring on our new property. It took a while to get straight where the boundaries were and we city people sometimes got lost in our woods. But we got our bearings soon enough and were able to figure out what was here. The big meadow southwest of the house through the trees was not ours but

home to a herd of beefalo. Yup, we would sometimes wake up with loud mooing from these "cattle-buffalo cross" animals wandering outside. We got our first lesson on the stray cattle "protocol." Running outside banging a pot to scare them off was not helpful! Our neighbour, Jim, would then spend all day tracking them down in the woods. I'm amazed how he was so calm about telling us to "just call him" and he'd come get them. After a few years we had a nice "patent fence" built through the woods to deal with the cow problem. One of our trails is still called the "Cow Path" even though we haven't seen cows at the house in over 20 years. Jim has passed away now and there are no more beefalo in the meadow.

In what people like to call the "back forty" we found it all flooded with dead trees sticking up. We were disappointed, couldn't walk there. Hmmm. Then Mum came back one day in the spring, excited as she had seen ducks in the water. Of course, we had a cattail marsh, a wetland! And it was full of life, with wonderful things to see. The more we looked, the more interesting and exciting it really was. At the front, on the right side of the property, there is about five acres of cedar bog. On the left, where our lane goes to the house, and in the middle portion, it is mostly hardwood. At the very back, across the marsh, is a small meadow.



That's when the "nature project" really got going. Mum and Dad cut a series of trails through the woods. We asked Carson Thompson, who in 1990 was manager of the Perth Wildlife Reserve, if he knew anyone who could build us a small boardwalk into our marsh. He could not find anyone but was so intrigued that he came to the property and then produced a plan of work. He and his son built a 200 feet boardwalk, erected six wood duck boxes in the marsh, and cleared poplar trees in a small section of the woods to accelerate the transition to mature forest in that area. He left the good hardwood standing and planted dozens of saplings—Red Oak, pine and spruce. He cleared a small meadow in front of our one large pine tree and planted more pine saplings. Brush piles for small animals were created. We were thrilled with the work they did, almost as much as our beavers were. When contemplating what we might do with the fallen brush from the poplars, we could almost hear the shrieks of excitement and joy from the beavers. They excavated a new channel through the marsh to the closest point to the poplar brush. In short time they had industriously chewed off all the small branches and towed them off down their new channel—and the brush was gone!

It was not too hard to find the dam. It was huge, running a couple of hundred feet, and must have been there for quite a while. The dam runs almost parallel to our left boundary line. In front of the dam is a small open pond which is often a noisy honking place of Canada Geese during migration. Belted Kingfishers share the pond with ducks, turtles, frogs and other surprises. Two years ago I heard first, then spotted flying low over the house, a Trumpeter Swan flying up to the pond. The dam and pond are just outside our property line and, back then, belonged to our neighbour Stan. We met Stan one day when he visited his land. He didn't live there but hoped to build a house one day. We had to walk on his land to get back to the dam. Mum and I would cross a small creek, which we still call "Stan's Creek," and then walk along a wooded ridge that borders the marsh at the left. The creek area was a great birding spot and our best place for finding White-winged Crossbills in the winter. There were lots of hemlock there which attracted porcupine. I still love porcupine despite their deserved reputation for killing trees. Mum had joined The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club and took up birding while up on the Ottawa River. Over the years she became a great birder. And so I became a birder too.

Without the dam we have no wetland. This reality was dramatically demonstrated 10 years ago, when Jim still had his beefalo. It was an extremely wet spring and the marsh was getting very high and water was creeping further into Jim's meadow. He got the idea that if he could just lower the level of the dam it would make things better. Stan was getting old and wasn't getting around much anymore—he never did build his house. Jim called Stan and told him the water level was up three feet, which was quite an exaggeration but he got Stan's permission to deal with the dam. Jim and his buddy from a local construction company went up to the dam the night

of May 8, 2004 with some dynamite. He blew a huge hole about 6 ft across and 8 ft deep into the dam. The next morning the marsh had completely drained. We were stunned and Jim was horrified at what he had done. Jim told us his story. He would never do this again but we wondered—would there be another marsh? The summer of nesting Wood Ducks and Mallards, turtles and everything relying on that huge marsh was gone—about 20 acres of wetland. But beavers are industrious and amazing! They must have started the repair of this violent damage immediately. We are thankful they survived, as a blast like that could easily have killed them too.

Later in the season, as the dam gained some height, we judged it possible to implement a solution to the water level problem. Suzanne and I, with our nephew's help, hauled PVC pipe up to the dam. Our idea, with Stan's approval, was to run a long stretch of pipe across the dam leading away from the back of the dam. If water rose above the pipe it would be quietly piped away. The beavers could build the dam higher but the water in the marsh would remain high enough but not spread so far into the meadow. It didn't work and the pipe is gone, when and how we don't know, but nature and the beavers are again regulating the height of the marsh. Stan has died, his land sold and a house has been built on our left. We have told our new neighbours about the dam (their dam) and the marsh and how they go together. Jeff, is a policeman and we are satisfied that no more nighttime dynamiting is in the foreseeable future.



With the board walk and trails complete, we started really paying attention to nature. Mum kept records on a daily basis – what she had seen walking in the wood and at

our feeders. We used to keep bird feeders up for more than the winter until black bears started hanging around and pulling them down. Mum learned that running out and banging pots worked better on bears than cows! We have only had about three seasons with bears seen but probably they have been around more than that. One day a few years back Mum met Jeff on the trail that borders our land to theirs, and he asked her if she knew a bear had just crossed the trail behind her? She had no idea.

Later that year Suzanne and I were standing at the end of the boardwalk photographing turtles when I turned back to the shore upon hearing a noise and saw a bear climb out of the marsh onto the boardwalk, look at us, turn to shore, walk a few paces and go back into the cattails to continue his walk. Another time a young bear appeared out of the woods, and came to the back gate of the fence that encloses the back yard and swimming pool. He watched us for a while but left when I started walking toward the gate to get a better photo. We had this silly feeling of being animals in the "human" enclosure with the bear being the visitor to the zoo.

Mum's detailed records show the first date of each returning migrant in the spring. The Eastern Phoebe that nest on a ledge under the eaves usually arrived mid-to-late April but now come back, on average, a week earlier. I know that the Virginia Rails arrive the first week of May unless it's a cold spring. They have been one of our favourites. We have several pairs and it's still exciting to get a glimpse of a little black chick. The records list every bird seen and which have nested on the property. The first mammal listed was a Coyote followed by Red Squirrel, Eastern Chipmunk, Groundhog, Raccoon, Porcupine, Red Fox, White-tailed Deer, American Beaver, Otter, Muskrat, weasel, Ermine, Striped Skunk, Fisher, Snowshoe Hare, Long-tailed Weasel, American Black Bear, and Mink recorded last in March 2010.

The trails all have names for things sighted there. In the records, June 14, 1988 has the satisfying entry: "*Great Horned Owl at Owl Lookout 7:00 am. Just finished Deerpath day before so it was very rewarding. First early am walk.*" So Owl Lookout is named. That was the key—getting out early. We have had some great experiences with owls and some tragic. One year in the winter a Barred Owl sat in a tree by the yard feeders for several days. It didn't seem to bother the birds so much during the day but probably had good "pickens" at night with the mice coming for the seeds. We have sat on the back screen porch many nights listening to the Barred Owls calling as night falls. Once, during the night, there was much calling and distress. Next day we were in sorrow over a young Barred Owl who had drowned in the swimming pool. All the more heart breaking as we had been delighted in seeing two siblings sitting side by side on the fence the evening before. If only we had understood the distress calls of the surviving sibling . . . I still think of it often.

About eight years ago Suzanne decided to build another boardwalk, leaving from Tanager Lookout and heading across the marsh to the far side where we knew there was a small meadow. The only way there was on snowshoes in the winter and we suspected it would be a wonderful butterfly meadow in summer. It was a daunting undertaking and I didn't feel I had the ability to complete such a project. Suzanne persevered and over eight years, largely on her own, built a 1622 foot boardwalk to the "Farside." Last summer was the first time in 27 years that we saw this amazing meadow. The new boardwalk is called the Rail Trail because it passes through an area where the Virginia Rail and Sora are seen. We now know the rails stay much later in the season than we originally thought. They kept Suzanne company as she worked each fall on the new boardwalk. Construction could never begin before late July to make sure all nesting species had their young well fledged. Part of the new Rail Trail is a high wide bridge crossing a deep channel in the marsh which gives great views toward the pond and other areas of the marsh.



Dad had been the main source of "heavy" labour for many years, keeping trails cleared of fallen trees and brush growing in. What a task that was after the ice storm in 1998. That was sorrow here as in many places with the loss of perhaps 50% of the upper canopy. The numbers of songbirds seen during the next summers were greatly affected. Over the years we have noticed the decline in birds generally. This is in keeping with the general observations everywhere. The canopy has recovered quite well but will take a long time to get back to pre-ice storm quality. Twenty seven years ago our woods were still a young forest, as they were probably only 70 or 80

years past a time of logging, so the ice storm was a major setback. There was, however, a great stand of mature maples on the trail to Owl Lookout and in several years during the 1990s I tapped those maples in the spring and brought the sap to the house. I have memories of glorious springs boiling sap for maple syrup. Warm spring days, sitting in the yard watching the birds arrive—grackles and blackbirds, and seeing the Red-shouldered Hawks flying over the marsh. For years, before the ice-storm, the hawks nested just past Stan's Creek.

Mum's records show clearly the decline in songbirds. This is the data on warblers—resident and migratory:

- 1991-1997 on average 15 different species were sighted during the year (most—1993, 18 species; least—1995, 12 species)
- 1998 (year following the ice-storm), 9 species
- 1999, 14 species
- 2000-2011 on average 9 difference species were sighted during the year (most—2002, 13 species; least—2009 and 2011, 6 species)

How much of this decline is due to the canopy damage of the ice-storm is unknown but the recent low numbers seem to confirm the general decline in warblers everywhere.

Dad is the only one who saw the Spotted Turtle. He found it while walking Beaver Alley, which goes along the edge of the marsh. It is our only record of that species. We have many records of Snapping Turtles and Blandings Turtles, who insist on laying their eggs in holes they dig in inconvenient spots in the yard. And, of course, we have lots of Painted Turtles. One year Mum got worried we didn't have enough "loafing logs" for the turtles, so I made some rafts, but there are really lots of fallen logs for them. The marsh has undergone changes which were initially a concern but the transition from cattails to sedge grasses at the edges is just natural. Twenty five years ago there was open water by a Wood Duck box next to the boardwalk. It has finally closed in with grasses but this spot was a good viewing place for many years, with a nice bench to sit and watch for ducks and rails. As cattails grew in Dad tried to keep it open by going in with hip waders and cutting the cattails under the water line every other year. This was done in early July, so not to disturb the birds, but before the reeds could store all their nourishment for next year's growth. It worked for a while and Suzanne took over about 10 years ago but now the grasses have moved in. It does not seem to matter to the wildlife. I have come to believe over the years to not try to manage too much. Nature takes its course and makes many fewer mistakes than I would!

The original six Wood Duck boxes are now eight. A few have fallen down, been replaced or moved and new ones added. Each January for the past 25 years I have



snowshoed out to the boxes to check for nests and replace their wood shavings. In the first years Mum accompanied me, but now Suzanne and I check the boxes and in recent years our friend Diane Lepage comes as well. Carson Thompson had thought we would do well to have two of our boxes with successful nests each season. This January of 2015 our trek around the

marsh found five of our eight boxes had successful nests. A banner year!

As time went on Mum found she had seen all the birds, butterflies and hunted down mushrooms, mosses, flowers and lichens. It is all recorded. Many have photo album documentation. Sometimes Mum would consider something like moths and say, "I'm not going to get interested in moths, they're too difficult." Two years later Suzanne and Mum are going out several nights a week, spring, summer and fall, to inspect a black-light lit sheet to photograph moths. They have over 500 species photographed and identified. Mum comes in from a walk with a photo of a caterpillar that she must identify—from one of our several caterpillar books. She says, "I don't know why I'm looking at these, I don't even like caterpillars!"



Thanks Mum. Thanks Dad.

Bird Highlights from the 50K and Environs Spring and Summer 2014

Gillian Mastromatteo

Weather can strongly affect the migration patterns and distribution of birds, and perhaps the prolonged unseasonal temperatures of early spring are the reason why a number of rare or interesting birds were found in the 50K later on. March began with colder than average temperatures, and this trend continued into early April. As a result, it took much longer than usual for the frozen marshes and ponds to thaw, and for the ice of the Ottawa River to break up. When at last the weather warmed up, the floodgates opened and a large number and variety of birds were observed during migration. Although the summer was relatively dry, temperatures remained at or below seasonal. In early August the water level of the Ottawa River began to fall, and some decent shorebird habitat began developing along the shore at Shirley's Bay and Andrew Haydon Park. However, heavy rainfall in the second half of the month caused the water levels to rise again.

RECORDS AND RARITIES

A boldly-coloured male **Yellow-headed Blackbird** was the first exciting vagrant reported in the Ottawa-Gatineau District this spring. This western bird spent four days near the Kanata Lakes Golf Course between April 17 and April 20. A regular wanderer in the east, there have been over 20 reports for this species in the region.

On April 27, a male **Hooded Warbler** was discovered at a tiny park along the Joek River off of Steeple Hill Creseent. The range of this species normally extends only as far north as southwestern Ontario, and there are only three previously accepted reports of this species in the 50K. It stayed at Terry Carisse Park until May 1. Another male, or perhaps the same one, was observed on the trails north of Rue St-Dominique in Gatineau on May 17.

A **White-eyed Vireo**—another southern species whose range barely falls in southwestern Ontario—was discovered singing at Shirley's Bay on May 15. On the same day, a male **Prairie Warbler** was seen at the Innis Point Birding Observatory, frequently flicking its tail. Another male **Prairie Warbler**, or perhaps the same bird, was reported from Stratheona Park a few days later on May 23. These two species

have been seen in Ottawa in the past, although Prairie Warbler is the more frequent visitor.

Our region's first **Chuck-Will's-Widow**, a member of the nightjar family, was heard calling along Rifle Road near Shirley's Bay on May 17 and again on the 19th. This bird is typically found in the southern United States, though it has been known to wander as far north as Canada on rare occasions.

Two different reports of an unknown **ibis** species, either **Glossy**, **White-faced**, or one of each, came at the end of May. One was reported flying over the Carp River near March Road on May 20 and the other was seen flying east from Upper Dwyer Hill Road northeast of Pakenham on May 22. These birds are known to wander in the spring, but good views are required to distinguish between them.

An **American White Pelican** was observed along the Ottawa River on the Quebec side near the south end of Chemin Parker across from Constance Bay. This western species spent four days here, from July 17 through to the 21st, before flying west. There are only six previous records of this species in the Ottawa-Gatineau District, which is well east of its normal range.

On August 5, an adult **Forster's Tern** was photographed with two **Common Terns** at Ottawa Beach. Single birds are regular wanderers into the region; however, the last sighting of this species occurred in 2011.

WATERFOWL

The ponds and waterways around Ottawa usually begin to open up in March, but the ice was slow to recede this past spring. The Ottawa River at Bate Island and the Mississippi River were the most productive areas for waterfowl during this month. **Barrow's Goldeneyes**, **Bufflehead**, **Common Mergansers** and **Red-necked Grebes** were found at Bate Island, while a very early **Pied-billed Grebe** was seen on the Mississippi River on March 12. In Carleton Place, two **Trumpeter Swans** were seen sporadically on the Mississippi. **Hooded Mergansers** arrived in Carleton Place by March 27, followed by **Ring-necked Ducks** the following week.

Canada Geese began to increase during the last week of March. By April 10 extensive flooding on Cobbs Lake Creek began to attract 200-700 **Snow Geese**, and by the time the water receded at the end of the month an estimated 40,000 **Snow Geese** were observed foraging in the fields. Interspersed among the geese were an adult **Ross's Goose**, several thousand **Northern Pintail**, and several **Green-winged Teal** and **Ring-necked Ducks**. The flooded fields along Milton and Frank Kenny

Roads produced a greater variety of ducks in mid-April, including **Wood Duck**, **American Wigeon**, **Blue-winged Teal** and **Redhead**.

Large numbers of **Snow Goose** (up to 5,000) were also reported near Chesterville and Winchester at the beginning of April, while small numbers of **Cackling Geese** (usually single birds) were seen throughout April with a group of five observed on the Carp River southeast of Carp on April 21. **Greater White-fronted Geese** are much harder to find in the region, but one was seen at the Carp River floodplain on April 19 and 22 while another was discovered on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River at Parc National du Plaisance on April 27. A flock of approximately 1,000 **Snow Geese** and one **Ross's Goose** at the Winchester sewage lagoons on May 11 were late for our region. Ten **Brant** flying over Canaan Road east of the city on April 26 were early. They are more commonly observed in May, and flocks of up to 200 were seen on or over the Ottawa River late that month.

Kars isn't usually known as a great spot for waterfowl migration in the spring, but flooded fields along Lockhead Road East and Rideau Valley Drive provided optimal conditions for 16 species of waterfowl from April 18-20, including a male **Eurasian Wigeon**. Another male Eurasian Wigeon was found at Parc National du Plaisance on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River on April 21.



Swans are not commonly reported in Ottawa (except for the city-owned "Royal Swans" that inhabit the Rideau River in the warmer months), but on May 5, a **Trumpeter** and a **Tundra Swan** were seen flying over Russell together east of Ottawa.

In early May, a large number of grebes stopped over on their way to their breeding grounds. On May 1, 51 **Horned** and 83 **Red-necked Grebes** were counted at Shirley's Bay; 25 Red-necked Grebes were still present on the 4th and lesser numbers were seen elsewhere along the river. Two Horned Grebes and two **Pied-billed Grebes** were observed at Andrew Haydon Park on May 7.

By June waterfowl migration was largely over, with a few exceptions. Twenty **White-winged Scoters** seen near Deschênes Rapids on June 5 were one of the last signs of migration. An injured male Eurasian Wigeon was discovered at the mouth of the Rideau Canal on May 27 and continued in the same area of the Ottawa River until at least August 8. Another was observed on the Moodie Drive quarry pond on July 2. A single **Snow Goose** was present on Shea Road on June 3 and another was seen at the Winchester lagoons in mid-July. Three swans, most likely Trumpeter Swans, were seen on June 14 flying east over the Moodie Drive ponds at 7:50 a.m. and then an hour later flying into a marsh near the International Airport.

Waterfowl migration began again in August. Although we normally associate the arrival of the diving ducks with the cooler weather of fall, the first diving ducks—a female **Common Goldeneye** and two **Lesser Scaup**—were reported at Shirley's Bay in the middle of the month. A female **White-winged Scoter** was observed at the Casselman lagoon on August 19.

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS AND HERONS

Although **Wild Turkeys** have become more and more common in the Ottawa region, **Gray Partridges** and **Ruffed Grouse** seem to be more difficult to find. One Gray Partridge was seen along Shea Road on March 13; others were recorded north of Russell in mid-March (6) and early June (2). Some of the more consistent spots for Ruffed Grouse over the spring and summer were Shirley's Bay, the Carp Hills just off Thomas Dolan Parkway, and the Bill Mason Center. They are more often heard than seen in the spring when the males are busy drumming.

Hérons are among the first migrants to return in the spring, and the first **Great Blue Herons** started appearing around March 23 while the first reports of **American Bittern** came from the Richmond Sewage Lagoons and the west end of Rue Lamoureux on April 13. By the end of the month small numbers of both **Great Egrets** and **Black-crowned Night-herons** had returned to the breeding colony on

Conroy Island in the Deschênes Rapids. These colonies appeared to be successful as up to 21 Great Egrets and an extraordinary 51 juvenile Black-crowned Night-herons were counted in mid-August. **Green Herons** are later migrants, returning around the end of April or beginning of May, and at least six were observed at Mud Lake on May 4. **Least Bitterns**, which also arrive in May, are the most elusive of the local heron species, but Constance Creek at the Thomas Dolan Parkway and Parc-Martin-Larouche in Gatineau were the most reliable places to see our region's smallest heron in the spring and summer.

RAPTORS, EAGLES AND VULTURES

The OFNC established its first official spring hawk watch in 2014, with many interested observers gathering regularly on Greenland Road in March and April to record their sightings. Without a large body of water to funnel the birds north, such as the Great Lakes in the south, bird counts remained low, although the diversity was excellent. Species noted from the hawk watch site include **Rough-legged Hawk**, **Red-tailed Hawk**, **Red-shouldered Hawk**, **Sharp-shinned Hawk**, **Cooper's Hawk**, **Merlin**, **Northern Harrier**, **Osprey**, **Bald Eagle**, **Golden Eagle** and **Turkey Vulture**.

The first Turkey Vulture of the year was reported in the Ottawa area on March 18 flying over Highway 416 near Fallowfield Road. Rough-legged Hawks lingered into early May. Broad-winged Hawks returned in late April, with one large kettle seen over Dunrobin at the end of the month. Another kettle of at least 35 birds was observed on May over Hurdman Park. Golden Eagles were seen sporadically until the beginning of May in Gatineau and along the Ottawa River, while Bald Eagles were more common on both sides of the river. On March 27 five Bald Eagles were seen feeding on a distant deer carcass in the Gatineau Hills.

Although the resident downtown **Peregrine Falcons** were seen around the Delta Hotel throughout the spring, and evidence in the form of discarded bird remains, particularly those of **Northern Flicker**, was found on more than one occasion, Diana and her new mate Janus were not successful in raising any young. It is not known whether they in fact laid any eggs as the Falcon Watch team was not able to gain access to the roof area where they nest. The Heron Road pair was much more successful—Ivanhoe and Rowena raised three offspring, all of which fledged under the diligent monitoring of the Falcon Watch.

RAILS, GALLINULES AND CRANES

By early May both **Sora** and **Virginia Rails** had arrived and were being observed in marshes around our region. **Common Gallinules**, on the other hand, seem to have a distinct preference for sewage lagoons—most of the local lagoons contained a breeding pair or two, though there were likely more than that at the St. Albert and

Crysler lagoon. By mid-August as many as 30 of these birds were observed in the vegetation surrounding the lagoon cells. One person described the lagoons as a "gallinule factory" in an eBird report, counting several immature birds along with a few adults. By mid-August these species began to disperse from their breeding grounds, and all three were seen along the marsh line of the spit west of the Shirley's Bay dyke over a period of several days, with Common Gallinule outnumbering the others.

Sandhill Cranes returned early in April, with up to 15 seen feeding in the corn stubble on Milton Road while smaller numbers were found in the surrounding area. Sightings of these birds disappeared by the end of the month, and none were reported throughout the summer except for a pair east of Almonte on Highway 49 on July 19.

SHOREBIRDS

As snow still remained on the ground, and many rivers, ponds and wetlands were still frozen well into April, the earliest-returning shorebirds—**Killdeer**, **Wilson's Snipe** and **American Woodcock**—arrived later than usual. While these summer residents usually return in mid- to late March, none were reported until early April. Rifle Road was a reliable spot for hearing American Woodcocks engaged in their springtime courtship display at dusk; as many as nine were observed in a single evening! Up to three Wilson's Snipe were heard winnowing there as well.

Although shorebird migration is usually not as dynamic in the spring as in the fall due to high water levels in the rivers and ponds around the region, some notable migrants did show up in various wet spots created by the melting of the late-lingering snow. The first migrant, a **Greater Yellowlegs**, was reported on April 13 from the flooded fields along Milton Road. By the beginning of May, **Spotted Sandpiper**, **Pectoral Sandpiper** and **Upland Sandpiper** had all returned. A very early **Long-billed Dowitcher** showed up in a flooded field on Ramsay Concession 7 just north of Carleton Place on May 1 and spent three days there before moving on. A flooded area on Brophy Road near Moodie Drive was an unlikely hotspot for a number of species in early June including Killdeer, Greater Yellowlegs, **Semipalmated Plover**, **Black-bellied Plover**, **Lesser Yellowlegs**, **Dunlin** and both **Red-necked** and **Wilson's Phalarope**. One surprised birder found a single **Purple Sandpiper** at Britannia Pier on May 25, a species rarely seen here in the spring!

As the fields dried up toward the end of May, the eastern sewage lagoons continued to host a small number of shorebirds. On May 31 a **Marbled Godwit** dropped in at the Alfred lagoons just outside of the OFNC study area. In mid-June, one **Solitary**

Sandpiper, one Lesser Yellowlegs, and one Black-bellied Plover were seen at the St. Albert sewage lagoon.

Southbound (or "fall") migration usually begins in July for shorebirds that do not find mates on their breeding grounds in the Arctic. With virtually no shorebird habitat at Shirley's Bay in July, the eastern lagoons continued to be the most productive areas to find them. Two **Short-billed Dowitchers** were observed at the Alfred lagoon on July 8, while three more were discovered at the Winchester lagoon on July 15 and another showed up at the storm sewer ponds south of Ogilvie Road on the 24th. A very early adult **Baird's Sandpiper** was reported at the Casselman lagoons on July 27. By August enough mudflats had developed at Shirley's Bay and Andrew Haydon Park to attract shorebirds in the west end. Single **Wilson's Phalaropes** were seen at Andrew Haydon Park and the Russell lagoon on August 10. Among the usual suspects at Shirley's Bay that month were Short-billed Dowitcher, Black-bellied Plover (3), Baird's Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope and **Ruddy Turnstone**. The lagoons still continued to be very productive; a single Long-billed Dowitcher, a **Stilt Sandpiper**, and a Baird's Sandpiper were reported at the Embrun lagoon on August 24, while two more Baird's Sandpipers showed up at the Chrysler lagoon on August 28. On August 20, a flock of 21 dowitchers circled briefly over the Richmond lagoons but did not land or provide an opportunity to positively identify them. The sod farms on Boundary Road south of French Settlement Road were particularly productive for **American Golden Plover**, with up to 31 being seen by the end of the month.

LARIDS

After a cold winter the gulls finally began to return in the second week of March, with all the regular species (**Ring-billed, Herring, Great Black-backed, Iceland, and Glaucous Gulls**) being seen from the Britannia Yacht Club. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were observed in the Deschênes Rapids vicinity on April 7 and 13. An immature Iceland Gull was observed at the Nepean Sailing Club as late as April 21, while an even later Glaucous Gull was found at Britannia on May 7.

An early **Bonaparte's Gull** dropped in at Andrew Haydon Park on April 19, although the next sighting did not occur until May 1 when one was found at Britannia Bay. They became much more numerous along the Ottawa River throughout the latter half of May, with sightings dropping off again after the first week of June. Post-breeding birds began returning by the end of July. Several **Little Gulls**, not a species common in Ottawa, were observed by many birders between May 18 and May 24, moving between the Britannia Pier to the eastern end of the Deschênes Rapids.

Caspian Terns do not breed in our region but occasionally visit the area in the spring and summer. One was seen at Petrie Island on April 20, while more reliable locations such as Shirley's Bay, the Britannia Pier, and the Moodie Drive quarry pond hosted multiple birds throughout the warmer months. **Common Terns** were first reported from the Ottawa River on May 2 and were seen off and on along the river throughout the summer. Almost 30 **Black Terns** were observed over the Ottawa River Lochaber Bay in Rockland on June 15. Smaller numbers were reported from their usual spots at Petrie Island and Marais aux Grenouillettes just across the river in Quebec throughout the summer. The Ottawa River falls along a major migration route for **Arctic Terns**, and this year a flock of 44 terns were seen flying upriver on May 25, with smaller numbers observed over the first week of June.

OWLS, WOODPECKERS AND OTHER NON-PASSERINES

Snowy Owls from last winter's irruption lingered into May, but one special bird remained in the Ottawa Valley until June 1. This owl was being monitored through Project SNOWstorm, whose volunteers had equipped the owl with a solar-powered transmitter on March 8, 2014 in order to record the owl's locations—not just in two dimensions, but in three! This information allows Project SNOWstorm to track where each owl spends its winters, when it returns north, where it spends the summer, and when it returns south again. This owl, nicknamed "Oswegatchie" for the New York creek close to where it was caught, lingered near Fitzroy Harbour for almost a full month until it began heading north at last on June 1. You can learn more about Project SNOWstorm at www.projectsnowstorm.org.

A female **Black-backed Woodpecker** lingered at Jack Pine Trail until mid-March, while a male was spotted along the boardwalk at Mer Bleue on May 4. Two **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** put in an appearance at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden on May 19; this is the first time this species has been recorded here. Two **Red-headed Woodpeckers** returned to the Constance Bay area and were seen sporadically until July.

Chimney Swifts returned to their breeding grounds in early May, and a flock of over 100 birds was observed feeding on high-flying insects at Britannia in the middle of the month. These birds depend heavily on man-made structures for nesting sites, and the OFNC was proud to contribute to the building of Canada's first artificial nesting structure that spring. When a disused tall chimney on McDowell school in Shawville, Quebec was shortened and capped in 2013, concerned birdwatchers realized that the colony of Chimney Swifts that had nested there for years would be prevented from accessing the interior when they returned in the spring. An online fundraising campaign and a donation from the OFNC helped them to build a new

structure by the time the swifts returned in May. Although the large colony of Chimney Swifts did not stay to nest in the new structure, observers noticed that, between June 2 and August 18, the roost was being used regularly by up to 4 swifts.

Eastern Whip-poor-wills returned to their breeding grounds in early May and were heard calling along the upper Thomas Dolan Parkway and in Larose Forest.

Common Nighthawks were also heard along the Thomas Dolan Parkway during the spring. One nighthawk was even observed in full courtship display in full daylight at 8:30 in the morning! A few were heard downtown in June where they once used to be quite common. By mid-August they were on their way south again, earlier than usual, with a flock of 24 birds seen over Shirley's Bay and a flock of over 80 birds seen a few days later over Pakenham. Both nightjar species (41 Common Nighthawks and 12 Eastern Whip-poor-wills) were also observed during the annual OFNC Seedathon on August 24.

Cuckoos are secretive birds that, although present in the 50K, have a knack for evading detection. **Black-billed Cuckoos** were observed near the airport, along the Thomas Dolan Parkway, and at the marsh between the former Nortel property and Corkstown Road. Both **Black-billed** and **Yellow-billed Cuckoos** were seen southeast of Richmond in mid-July.

PASSERINES

With temperatures remaining below seasonal throughout March, our early passerine migrants returned later than usual. Although a few migrants started to trickle into the region in mid-March, it took some time before birds such as **American Robin**, **Red-winged Blackbird**, **Common Grackle** and **Song Sparrow** became widespread. In the meantime, we still had some "winter birds" to keep us company while we waited for the summer residents to return. **Snow Bunting**, **Horned Lark** and **Lapland Longspur** continued to be reported from rural areas, a **Northern Shrike** was heard singing downtown, and four **Evening Grosbeaks** continued visiting a feeder in Larose Forest until late April.

Flycatcher migration began with **Eastern Phoebe**s trickling in at the beginning of April. The other regular species arrived right on time, with **Willow Flycatchers** and **Eastern Wood-pewees** arriving later in May. **Olive-sided Flycatchers** and **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** are rare but annual migrants, and one of each appeared briefly minutes apart at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden on May 26. Another Olive-sided Flycatcher was found at the marsh near the former Nortel property in late June. These two species are more easily found in late summer as they head south, and **Yellow-bellied Flycatchers** were seen at Shirley's Bay, Britannia, and NCC Trail

#10 in late August, while an Olive-sided Flycatcher was reported from Rockcliffe Park in the same period.

Six species of vireo were reported from the Ottawa region this past spring and summer. In addition to the aforementioned White-eyed Vireo at Shirley's Bay, single **Yellow-throated Vireos**—a species whose northern limit is just south of the 50K—were seen from both sides of the Ottawa River on May 11 and 14, in Richmond on August 17, at Britannia on August 24, and at Andrew Haydon Park for two days on August 24 and 25.

All of our breeding swallows returned in good numbers. In early July large flocks containing **Bank Swallows**, **Barn Swallows**, **Cliff Swallows** and **Northern Rough-winged Swallows** were seen at Deschênes Rapids and the Casselman lagoons.

A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** spent a week at Britannia from May 4 until at least May 11. A single **Boreal Chickadee** was reported at Baie Simard in Gatineau on March 28. **Carolina Wrens** were observed regularly in the Qualicum Graham Park neighbourhood throughout the season and occasionally elsewhere, while **Sedge Wrens** were reported from the Richmond Fen in June and regularly from the marsh between Corkstown Road and the former Nortel property throughout the summer. Good numbers of **Ruby-crowned Kinglets** moved through our region in the spring. **Northern Mockingbirds** continue to be reported irregularly in the 50K; these birds do not seem to be faithful to one particular area, so finding one requires a great deal of luck. **Bohemian Waxwings** were completely absent from the region this spring, while the number of **Cedar Waxwings** found at Britannia and elsewhere in early May was, in the words of one observer, "mind-boggling." All of our thrushes were found in the appropriate habitats over the course of the summer, and the Seedathon crew heard at least 100 **Veery** and a few **Swainson's Thrushes** calling overhead before dawn on August 24.

Warbler-watching was excellent this past spring, with 28 species recorded in the 50K, including a **Blue-winged Warbler**, sightings of multiple **Orange-crowned Warblers** in multiple locations, and the above-mentioned **Prairie Warblers** and **Hooded Warblers**. **Golden-winged Warblers** were found again just off the Thomas Dolan Parkway, **Palm Warblers** returned to Mer Bleue, and **Mourning Warblers** were observed several times near the International Airport. During the breeding season, Larose Forest, Marlborough Forest, Meech Creek Valley in Gatineau Park, and the Thomas Dolan Parkway were excellent locations where multiple (six or more) species were recorded by observers with good birdsong identification skills. By the end of July a few post-breeding wanderers such as **Tennessee Warbler** and **Cape May Warbler** began showing up in Britannia. By mid-August early fall

migration was under way, with small mixed flocks showing up at Britannia, Shirley's Bay and Rockcliffe Park. A very early Orange-crowned Warbler was seen along the ridge at Britannia on August 22 and 24. By the end of the month 23 species had been reported in the Ottawa area, most of them from Britannia.

By early April a few sparrows had returned to Ottawa, with both resident breeders and migrants reported. **Fox Sparrows** were found in appropriate woodland habitats throughout the region and an early **Lincoln's Sparrow** had returned to its traditional breeding area at the Mer Bleue bog on April 21. At least eight sparrow species were found breeding in the grassy fields south of the International Airport, including **Field, Clay-coloured, Grasshopper** and **Vesper Sparrows**. Another good spot for breeding emberizids is the Thomas Dolan Parkway with **Field, Swamp** and **White-throated Sparrows** well-represented in the Carp Hills. This is usually the most reliable spot to find **Eastern Towhee** in the 50K, though single birds were also reported from south of the International Airport, NCC Trail #10 off Carling Avenue, Britannia, and near Richmond this spring and summer.

Indigo Buntings were reported from the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and Britannia in May, and were found in suitable habitat during the breeding season. Reliable locations for this species included south of the International Airport, the marsh near the former Nortel property, and the Reveler Recreational Trails.

Rusty Blackbirds arrived in early April, and good numbers of this declining species were found in a variety of places. A flock of 200 birds was observed in the Manotick Osgoode area on April 29, and up to 2,000 were noted roosting near the Mer Bleue boardwalk in early May. Other icterids returned to their favoured habitats in good numbers once the weather began to warm up.

It was an unusually finch-less winter, so we were not graced with any of the Boreal finches returning north in the spring. **Purple Finches** do breed locally, and were reported consistently from Stony Swamp, the marsh near the former Nortel property, and Mer Bleue.

The information in this article was derived from postings to the Ontario Field Ornithologists listserve (ONTBIRDS), reports to the OFNC website (sightings@ofnc.ca) and Facebook page, eBird, Project SNOWstorm (www.projectsnowstorm.org) and the Shawville Swift Roost Project campaign page (www.indiegogo.com/projects/shawville-quebec-swifts-in-distress-sos-martinets). The OFNC Bird Sightings page is updated regularly and can be found at <http://www.ofnc.ca/breports.php>. The OFNC website is a highly recommended resource for a wealth of information about birding in and around the region.

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Coming Events

Arranged by the OFNC Events Committee
For further information, please check our website
www.ofnc.ca

PLEASE NOTE: The OFNC website ([ofnc.ca](http://www.ofnc.ca)) contains the most up-to-date information on events. Please check it regularly for changes or additions. The Club's Facebook site <<http://www.facebook.com/groups/379992938552/>> and Twitter account <[@OttawaFieldNat](https://twitter.com/OttawaFieldNat)> may also be used to announce last minute changes to events. **Note that we anticipate having several weather and year-dependent events that are not included in *Trail & Landscape* and will only be announced at the last minute via our website, Facebook and Twitter.** These include seasonal events such as Snowy Owl viewing, the spring Snow Goose spectacle, Eardley Eagles and Mudpuppy Night.

ALL OUTINGS: Field trips to natural areas in our region and beyond take place all year round. These events are for OFNC members and prospective members. Prospective members are welcome unless the notice indicates that participation is limited, or that bus travel is involved.

Please bring a lunch on full-day trips and dress according to the weather forecast and activity. Binoculars and/or spotting scopes are essential on all birding trips. Unless otherwise stated, transportation will be by car pool.

MONTHLY MEETINGS: Our monthly meetings will be held at the **Central Experimental Farm in the K.W. Neatby Building, Salon B, at 960 Carling Avenue**. There is ample free parking in the lot on the West side of Maple Drive by Carling Ave., immediately to the east of the main entrance to the Neatby Building.

EVENTS ORIENTED TO ALL AGES: Kids are welcome on all of our trips. We have highlighted particular hikes as "oriented to all ages" as these are most likely to be enjoyed by typical children. Depending on your child(ren)'s interests and stamina, please feel free to bring them along on any events. For events tailored to kids, check out the Macoun Field Club (<http://www.ofnc.ca/macoun/index.php>).

Date TBA
8 p.m.
to
12:00
midnight(ish)

SPRINGTIME, STARLIGHT AND SALAMANDERS

Leader: Eleanor Thomson 613-269-3523

Meet: Thomson cabin (20 minutes beyond Calabogie), 90 minutes from Ottawa. This will involve late-night driving on forest highways.

Description: Experience the beauty and delights of springtime wilderness at night. A quiet visit to several salamander and frog breeding ponds as we wind our way through the woods, listening to nighttime sounds in the darkness. Extra-warm clothes and waterproof boots are essential. As this outing will be timed to coincide with the brief and unpredictable salamander mating season, please register with Eleanor well before the end of March (and mention if there are nights you are unavailable). We will send directions and details once a date is set, probably about a week in advance. Please note that this is a cell phone-free sanctuary. Cell phones are prohibited. **This event will probably happen in early April. Check Events on OFNC site (www.ofnc.ca) for updates.**

Saturday
11 April
8:00 a.m.
to
11:00 a.m.

LAID BACK BIRDING

Leader: Bev McBride

Meet: Entrance to Britannia Filtration Plant on Cassels Street.

Description: Join Bev to check out what birds are back or moving through as spring migration proceeds. We will spend a few hours leisurely exploring the Mud Lake area, taking our time to listen and look. Bring binoculars and your favourite bird field guide if you have one. Suitable for all levels, beginners most welcome. Trails are easy but people with mobility concerns may find some paths unsuitable or inaccessible. Rain or shine. Waterproof footwear advised.

Tuesday
14 April
7:00 p.m.
Social

7:30 p.m.
Presentation

OFNC MONTHLY MEETING ACROSS THE ARCTIC BY CANOE

Speaker: Jennifer Kingsley

Description: Join Ottawa author and naturalist Jennifer Kingsley, author of *Paddlenorth: Adventure, Resilience, and Renewal in the Arctic Wild*, for a trip across the Arctic by canoe. Jennifer will show pictures, tell stories and read from her new book. She'll talk about wildlife, whitewater and life on a 54-day expedition (see www.jenniferkingsley.ca/paddlenorth). Jennifer also works as a naturalist aboard the National Geographic Explorer. She'll show some National Geographic photos from her 2014 trip to Ellesmere Island. "A perilous journey through an unforgiving landscape. A wild adventure that sweeps you up in its wake. Jennifer Kingsley is a wicked paddler and a beautiful writer." — Andrew Westoll

Saturday
18 April
7:00 p.m.
to
10:00 p.m.

OFNC AWARDS NIGHT

Especially Kid friendly

Location: St. Basil's Parish Church, 940 Rex Avenue
(GPS Address: 899 Maitland Avenue).

Enter from Maitland Avenue (east side) just north of the Queensway. Bus Access: Bus #85 (along Carling Avenue), get off at Maitland Avenue and walk south on Maitland towards the Queensway for 0.5 km (~ 7 minute walk).

Description: Join us for some fun at our annual wine and cheese party and celebrate with the honoured winners of our annual awards. Photographers and artists will exhibit new works for everyone to enjoy. Kids, bring your natural history displays. The Despotie Natural History Trivia Quiz will also be back. For information call Hume at 613-234-0122.

Sunday
26 April
8:00 a.m.
to
early
afternoon

MIGRANTS AT PARC NATIONAL DE PLAISANCE

Leaders: Mark Gawn and Rachelle Lapensee

Meet: Parc national de Plaisance, entrance on rue Galipeau, just north of the ferry dock in Thurso, Quebec.

Description: The park holds the largest wetlands in the Ottawa area, and the trip is timed to coincide with the tail end of the spring waterfowl migration. Expect to see many ducks along with early passerine migrants. The trip will proceed rain or shine, waterproof footwear is recommended. Bring binoculars and a spotting scope if you have one as some birds will be distant. There is \$6 gate fee to visit the park. The trip will end in the early afternoon, final stop will be a casse-croûte with some of the region's best poutine (but bring a snack to tide you over until then!)

Sunday
3 May
10:00 a.m.
to
early
afternoon

FLORA AND FAUNA OF SHEILA MCKEE PARK

Leader: Jakob Mueller (jm890_7@hotmail.com or 613-314-1495)

Meet: Parking lot for Sheila McKee Park, 1730 Sixth Line Road. Take the 417 to the March Road exit in Kanata. Take March Road north all the way through Kanata North. When the road curves to the left, turn right onto Dunrobin Road. Turn right again almost immediately onto Riddell Drive. Follow Riddell Drive east; when it curves sharply to the left, it becomes Sixth Line Road. There is a park entrance near this curve, but continue past it. A short distance later, turn right into the park driveway—a sign will be there with the park name and address (1730 Sixth Line Rd).

Description: Come and explore Sheila McKee Park, a little-known jewel of west Ottawa. The park has diverse wildlife, including abundant salamanders, snakes, and birds. Some unusual plant life is also present, and an interesting escarpment can be seen along the Ottawa River's shore.

Thursday
7 May
9:30 a.m.
to
12:30 p.m.

**EPHEMERAL WALK—TRILLIUM WOODS AND MONK
EXPERIMENTAL TRAIL**

Leader: Connie Clark

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, at the northeast corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza (Richmond Road at Assaly Road).

Description: After months of snowy white landscape, our colour-starved spirits are treated to the Spring ephemeral flowers in the woods. For them, the race is on to soak up as much sunlight as possible before the tree canopy throws the forest floor into shade. Now we can hope to see Dutchman's Britches, Squirrel Corn, Wild Bleeding Heart, Bloodroot, Spring Beauty, Hepaticas, Adder's Tongue, Foam Flower, Bellwort, Wild Ginger, White Trilliums and Red Trilliums. The trails are flat. Sometimes the paths have mud holes that need to be circumvented. The mosquitoes haven't hatched yet, so we can hope for a calm, leisurely stroll. This trip will be cancelled if it is raining in the morning.

Saturday
9 May
10:00 a.m.
to
3:00 p.m.

AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES OF MORRIS ISLAND

Especially Kid friendly

Leaders: David and Carolyn Seburn (davidseburn@sympatico.ca)

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of the parking lot, near the Pizza Pizza (Richmond Road at Assaly Road) to carpool, **OR** at 10:50 a.m. at the parking lot for the Morris Island Conservation Area.

Description: Join David and Carolyn to learn more about our native amphibians and reptiles. We will search for frogs, salamanders, snakes, and turtles around wetlands and in the woods as well as looking for other wildlife. Kids are definitely welcome. Bring binoculars if you have them and pack a lunch. There are washrooms near the parking area of the conservation area. The trip will be cancelled if it is a rainy day. If you are uncertain if the trip will go ahead, call David and Carolyn at 820-9125 between 9:00 and 9:30 a.m. on the day of the trip.

Tuesday	OFNC MONTHLY MEETING
12 May	TURTLES, FISH, CARIBOU, WHALES AND MORE: THE
7:00 p.m.	CANADIAN WILDLIFE FEDERATION TODAY
Social	Speaker: David Browne
	Location: Salon B, K.W. Neatby Building, Central Experimental Farm, 960 Carling Avenue.
7:30 p.m.	
Presentation	Description: For over 50 years, the Canadian Wildlife Federation has been working to protect wildlife and educate youth about conservation. Today, CWF is supported by over 280,000 Canadians, conducts science and policy work on conservation issues, and has an expanding education and youth program focused on instilling a conservation ethic in future generations. David, a freshwater ecologist by training, will outline the approach CWF takes to conservation. He will give an overview of some of CWF's core projects, such as responding to changes to the Fisheries Act, freshwater turtle conservation projects, American eel research in the Ottawa River, western boreal forest conservation and the plight of boreal caribou, and responding to threats to large marine animals in Canadian waters. He will also outline how CWF is working with the Children and Nature Network and other partners to educate future generations.

Sunday	SPRING EPHEMERALS OF GATINEAU PARK
17 May	Leaders: Bryarly McEachern and Amber Westfall
8:45 a.m.	Meet: Lincoln Fields parking lot, northeast corner near Pizza Pizza (Richmond Rd and Assaly Rd.) for carpooling and directions OR
to	10:00 a.m. at the Gatineau Park Visitor Centre, 33 Scott Rd., Chelsea, QC. From there we will relocate to the trail-head, to be determined closer to the date.
1:00 p.m.	Description: Join Bryarly and Amber for a walk in Gatineau Park to seek, admire, and learn about spring ephemerals. What are spring ephemerals? They are those lovely short-lived wildflowers that emerge in spring and disappear by early summer. Bring a wildflower guide (e.g. Newcomb's), notebook and hand lens, if you like. We will plan to have lunch in the forest, so feel free to bring your lunch along. Dress appropriately for the weather. This jaunt will run sun or sprinkle, but will be canceled in the event of heavy rain. If you have any questions about the trip, please email bryarly@gmail.com or call 613-858-8822. Hope to see you there!

Saturday
23 May
8:00 a.m.
to
12:00 noon

DUCKS AND GULLS ALONG THE RIVER

oriented to all ages

Leader: Roy John

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of parking lot, Richmond Road at Assaly Road, near Pizza Pizza.

Description: We will likely check Mud Lake, Shirley's Bay and the wetlands behind Nortel (depending the latest bird reports). At this date there should be several species of warbler, flycatchers, ducks, and gulls. If we are very lucky Arctic Tern, Marsh and Sedge Wren are possible. Snakes and turtles are usually visible. This is a rain or shine walk, so dress for the weather. Bring binoculars, a scope if you have one, a drink and a snack.

MAY 23 AND 24 WEEKEND EVENTS—UPPER OTTAWA VALLEY

Four events have been planned for this weekend. For accommodations on Saturday night, members must make their own arrangements. The leader of the Shaw Woods hike recommends the site: <http://www.ottawavalley.travel/> with the suggestion that The Sands at Golden Lake might be particularly appealing. Suggestions from people living in the area include <http://www.sandsongoldenlake.com> (rooms and cottages) and <http://www.spotswoodslanding.com> (cottages and camping).

Saturday
23 May
7:30 a.m.
to
12:00 noon
(on site)

OTTAWA RIVER (GERVAIS) CAVES PROPERTY NEAR WESTMEATH

Leader: Ali Giroux, Conservation Biologist, Nature Conservancy of Canada (contact: Lynn Ovenden, bigskies@xplornet.ca).

Members Only Event: The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club has made a significant contribution to the acquisition of the Gervais property. This event is open to members only. *Attendees for this event must register in advance by contacting Jakob Mueller at jm890_7@hotmail.com or 613-314-1495. Deadline is May 20.*

Meet: Lincoln Fields parking lot, northeast corner near Pizza Pizza (Richmond Rd & Assaly Rd) to arrange carpools for those attending the Saturday events **OR** 10:00 a.m. at entrance to the property. (To prevent excessive disturbance to this sensitive site, directions will be available to registrants only.)

Description: This newly-acquired, 80-acre shoreline property contains many of the entrances to the underwater caves that run below the Ottawa river linking Ontario and Quebec. Above ground, the property features over 135 native vascular plant species and a number of at-risk plant species, including the endangered Butternut tree, the provincially-rare Hooker's Orchid, regionally-rare moonseed and Hitchcock's Sedge. We might add some spring ephemerals to the species list of the property. We'll look for salamanders, amphibians and reptiles as well. Please wear comfortable walking shoes, bring a lunch and water, rain gear if necessary, and bug spray if desired.

Saturday
23 May
1:00 p.m.
to
4:00 p.m.
(on site)

BIRDING AT WESTMEATH PROVINCIAL PARK

Leader: Christian Renault of Pembroke Area Field Naturalists
(contact: Lynn Ovenden at bigskies@xplornet.ca)

Meet: 935 Westmeath Rd. Coordinates: 45.771134, -76.910610.

There is no parking lot, so park on the roadside, near the entrance.

Description: We will walk in a field and along a path (2.2 km) with an additional 1 km to see Bellows Bay on the Ottawa River. There is one steep hill (15% on 60 m). If you bring a tripod and scope, it might be a 5 km (return) walk. Mosquitoes and black flies may be active. Sometimes the Ottawa River drowns the bottom portion of the walk, and we have to stop after 1.5 km and return to the cars. In that case, we can drive a few km farther to Sand Point Rd to scan the Ottawa River. What we may see there: Broad-winged Hawk, Bald Eagle along the Ottawa River, a Northern Goshawk (seen a few times the last 2 years); Veery and Hermit Thrush; several warblers including Mourning, Northern Waterthrush, Black and White; Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks, Rusty Blackbirds (occasionally); Sandhill Cranes; Common Tern, Black Terns sometimes breed in Bellows Bay; several species of ducks, mergansers, Common Moorhen, Pied-Billed Grebe, Great Blue Heron; several sparrows. We might have a surprise appearance, since migration won't be quite finished.

Bring good walking shoes, maybe light boots for mud or wet; scope for nearby fields with Sandhill Cranes. Check the OFNC website closer to the date in case we need to modify this plan due to flooding.

Saturday
23 May
8:30 p.m.
to
12:00
midnight

MOTHING AT NIGHT IN THE OLD FOREST AT SHAW WOODS OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

Leader: Diane Lepage

Meet: The parking lot at the Pine Pavillion, 2065 Bulger Road.

Description: Come to the Shaw Woods forest to discover the night life of moths. Black lights will be set-up, and then we will wait as the various moths come to the white sheet set up to attract them. We should see Silkworm moths. Bring a flashlight, bug repellent, good footwear and a camera (the latter optional). This trip depends on the weather. Should the temperature drop below 16 °C or in the event of rain, the outing will be cancelled.

Sunday
24 May
8:45 a.m.
to
3:30 p.m.

EXPERIENCE SHAW WOODS

Leader: Grant Dobson (contact: Lynn Ovenden,
bigskies@xplornet.ca)

Meet: Lincoln Fields parking lot, northeast corner of parking lot near the Pizza Pizza (Richmond Road and Assaly Rd.) to arrange carpooling for the day **OR** 11:00 a.m. at the Pine Pavillion in Shaw Woods. The drive from Ottawa to Shaw Woods takes about 1.5 hours, via Hwy 17 & Hwy 60 to Kellys Corner, then north on Bulger Road (County Rd 9) to Shaw Woods, 2065 Bulger Road.

Description: Morning hike on the Old Growth Trail (1.6 km) followed by lunch stop at the Pine Pavilion. Bring your own picnic. Afternoon hike on the East Side trails (5 km) with lots of variety, including a good representation of spring flowers and, of course, the Bald Eagles' nest. Back to trailhead and departure at 3:30 p.m. Shaw Woods is one of eastern Canada's premier examples of an old growth maple/beech/hemlock forest, carefully protected for generations. The afternoon hike will cover some moderately rugged ground; with numerous observation stops, it should not be overly strenuous for most active people. People may also do just part of the east side trail or choose a shorter trail, or just sit at the lookout and watch the eagles attending to their nest. There is a lot to see. Our leader will be Grant Dobson, avid trail builder, naturalist, local history buff, chair of Shaw Wood's board of directors and photographer (see Shaw Woods Facebook . . . "Liking" the page gives you updates on what is in bloom). Admission and parking on site are free. Visitor Guides that describe various trails can be purchased on site for \$2 each or printed for free from *www.shawwoods.ca* or from Shaw Woods Facebook. It is a volunteer run, not-for-profit, charitable organization. Visitors are invited to make a small donation toward Shaw Woods Outdoor Education Centre for guided educational outings. Sturdy walking shoes or hiking boots recommended.

Sunday

24 May

8:00 a.m.
(sharp)

BIRDING AT SPARROW FIELDS

Leaders: Richard Waters

Meet: Tim Hortons, 372 Hunt Club Road, Ottawa

Description: We will go to the area immediately south of the Ottawa International Airport for a 3 km walk around the Leitrim and Bowesville Road area, also known as The Sparrow Fields. Aiming for 30+ species—seven species of Sparrow, including Grasshopper, Clay-coloured, Field, Savannah, Vesper, Song and White-throated, plus Bobolink, Eastern Bluebirds and an outside chance of Indigo Buntings. This is an all-weather outing—rain or shine. There is little shade, the path is uneven and slightly undulating, without any steep hill-climbing. Please bring a sun hat, sunblock, insect repellent, long pants, strong walking/hiking boots, rain gear, drinking water, sharp eyes and ears.

Wednesday

27 May

8:00 a.m.

to

12:00 noon

BIRDING IN THE SOUTH END

Leader: Gord Belyea

Meet: Take Albion Road south from Bank Street (approximately 6 km), turn west (to the right, opposite the OLG Slots sign) on High Road and continue for about 1 km to the parking area (it's a dead end) near the access point to the IFR Radar dome.

Description: The fields to the south of the airport offer one of the most diverse populations of sparrows in the area. We can expect to see Song, Savannah, Field, Chipping, Grasshopper, Vesper, Clay-coloured, and possibly White-throated and Swamp Sparrows on this walk. Other possibilities include Indigo Bunting, Nashville Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Tree Swallow, and Black-billed Cuckoo. There is also an important Eastern Bluebird trail in this area. Please note: there are no bathroom facilities on this walk.

Sunday

30 May

8:30 a.m.

to

12:30 p.m.

WILLOW WORKSHOP

Leader: George Argus

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, at the northeast corner of the parking lot, near Pizza Pizza (Richmond Road and Assaly Road) **OR** 9:30 a.m. at the Argus home at 310 Haskins Rd., Merriekville at 10:00 a.m.

Description: Willows (*Salix* spp.) can be a confusing group to sort out, unless George Argus is your guide. This trip will involve an overview of the characters of several local species of willow, followed by visits to a variety of sites. We will begin in the Marborough Forest area and will work our way back to Ottawa, by about 12:30 p.m. This trip will be cancelled if it's raining heavily. If in doubt, call Holly Bickerton at 613-730-7725.

Sunday
31 May
6:00 a.m.
to
11:30 a.m.

BIRDING BY EAR IN LAROSE FOREST

Leader: John Cartwright (613-789-6714)

Meet: Kelsey's in the Elmvale Acres Mall at the SW corner of St Laurent and Smyth for carpooling **OR** at 7:00 a.m. at the cemetery outside Limoges just south of Clarence-Cambridge Road on Grant Road.

Description: We likely will spend about four hours in the Larose Forest, listening to and observing songbirds. Bring binoculars, a snack, a drink, and plenty of mosquito repellent. There will be a variety of biting critters in the forest at this time of year. This trip will be cancelled in the event of continuous rain.

Saturday
6 June
9:30 a.m.
to
12:30 p.m.

FLETCHER WILDLIFE GARDEN ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE

Location: Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretation Centre. There will be people guiding you as to where to park.

Plant a wide variety of native plants that changes from month to month and that creates an ecological balance making herbicides, pesticides, and chemical fertilizers unnecessary. Most of our plants attract butterflies and birds that bring your garden to life. See page 50 of this issue for more information

Tuesday
9 June
7:00 p.m.
Social

7:30 p.m.
Presentation

OFNC MONTHLY MEETING FIVE MOONS IN AFRICA

Speaker: Carolyn Callaghan

Location: Salon B, K.W. Neatby Building, Central Experimental Farm, 960 Carling Avenue.

Description: Join Carolyn Callaghan and her family for a tour through five countries and fourteen protected areas in Southern Africa. The talk will chronicle a family adventure as well as discuss current wildlife conservation challenges and models for overcoming these challenges.

Thursday
11 June
6:30 p.m.
to
8:30 p.m.

THE BEST AND THE WORST OF THE FLETCHER WILDLIFE GARDEN

Leader: Sandra Garland

Meet: Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretation Centre—park at the ball diamond and walk east to the Interpretation Centre.

If you are coming from Carling to Prince of Wales, watch for the FWG sign on left hand side just as you pass the Botanical Gardens. From Baseline, watch for a red barn on the right hand side (the sign may be more difficult to see). The service dirt road is almost immediately to your right as you pass the red barn.

Description: Summer wildflowers are bright and new and the air is filled with birdsong. At the same time, invasive species are fighting for dominance. In the woods, removal of diseased ash trees last year changed the landscape dramatically; how will the native-invasive conflict play out there? In the meadow, will the hundreds of wildflowers continue to attract butterflies and birds, or will dog-strangling vine win out? Come and explore the battleground, and let's see how wildlife fares in the city.

Saturday
13 June
6:30 a.m.
to
12:00 noon

BIRDING IN GATINEAU PARK'S PARKWAY SECTOR

Leader: Justin Peter (*jhpctr@yahoo.ca* or 613-858-3744) and Carlos Barbery (TBC)

Meet: Lincoln Fields Shopping Centre, northeast corner of parking lot near the Pizza Pizza (Richmond Road and Assaly Road) **OR** 7:00 a.m. at the P8 parking lot in Gatineau Park.

Description: Gatineau Park is host to a great variety of habitats and consequently a great diversity of breeding birds. We will explore a number of areas by foot, traveling between each by vehicle as we gradually make our way up towards the Eardley Escarpment overlooking the Ottawa Valley. Along the way, we'll look and listen for birds in a variety of habitats, including beaver ponds, meadows, alder and willow thickets, and hardwood forest. We should expect a variety of warblers, vireos, sparrows, flycatchers and more. There is a possibility of observing Indigo Bunting and Scarlet Tanager, as well as both cuckoo species. And we will also look at anything else of interest! Binoculars, a drink and a mid-morning snack are recommended. There will likely be some elevation change so wear sturdy footwear. You may also need a hat and bug spray.

Thursday
25 June
7:00 p.m.
to
8:30 p.m.

**TOUR OF FLETCHER WILDLIFE GARDEN AND
BUTTERFLY MEADOW**

Leader: Isabelle Nicol

Meet: Fletcher Wildlife Garden Interpretation Centre. Park at the ball diamond and walk east to the Interpretation Centre.

If you are coming from Carling to Prince of Wales, watch for the FWG sign on left hand side just as you pass the Botanical Gardens. From Baseline, watch for a red barn on the right hand side (the sign may be more difficult to see). The service dirt road is almost immediately to your right as you pass the red barn.

Description: The Backyard Garden and Butterfly Meadow are truly beautiful areas in late June. Known for many native wildflowers, some of the late spring flowers should still be in bloom, and summer ones blooming, or coming into bloom. Our beautiful Prickly Pear Cactus should be sporting some of its golden blooms—a photographer's delight. Last year we were enthralled with close to twenty blooms adding a delightful display to the Rockery. There should be many birds around, as well as squirrels, chipmunks, frogs and insects. We will learn about many of the interactions between insects and flowers and among the other denizens that prowl the Backyard Garden and Butterfly Meadow. You will get to visit our new Fern Garden and pass by our greater pond as we leave the Interpretation Centre to walk towards the Butterfly Meadow. One of our more interesting nesting birds is the Green Heron. We may be fortunate to see one or two at the pond. We will also learn about some of the invasive species that are taking over this lovely area and what we are trying to do to eliminate the spread of some of these plants. We look forward to your joining us for a pleasant evening stroll at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden that is well-known for its delightful paths and scenery.

Saturday
4 July
8:30 a.m.
to
4:30 p.m.
(rain date
Sunday 5
July)

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL OTTAWA AREA BUTTERFLY COUNT

Especially Kid Friendly

Leaders: Jeff Skevington and Peter Hall

Meet: In the parking lot at the intersection of Dwyer Hill Road and March Road (NE of Almonte).

Call Jeff Skevington Friday evening at 613-720-2862 if in doubt about the weather or for specific questions regarding this event. Use OFNC Facebook or Twitter to arrange carpooling.

Description: Similar to Christmas Bird Counts, this event is an all-day survey of a 24 km diameter circle. There is a \$4.00 charge to participants to support the publication of the results. The count area is centred on Manion Corners (SW of Ottawa) and includes several important butterfly areas such as the Long Swamp and the Burnt Lands alvar. No experience is necessary—we will put teams together on site and match up people so that everyone has a chance to learn from the experts. If you have binoculars and a butterfly net, please bring them along. Butterflies may be captured for identification and release. **Rubber boots are recommended**, as some of the sites have a lot of poison ivy. Since it is an all-day event so **bring your lunch**.

We plan to meet at 6:00 p.m. after the count for a compilation and pot luck dinner (location to be announced). Please bring along some food to share plus your own drinks. We hope that everyone can make it to the compilation, as it will be a lot of fun; however, if you can't, we will get your data in the afternoon before you leave.

DEADLINE: Material intended for the July - September issue must be in the editor's hands by 1 May 2015. Mail your manuscripts to:

Karen McLachlan Hamilton

2980 Moodie Drive, Nepean, ON, K2J 4S7

H: (613) 838-4943; email: hamilton@storm.ca

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